

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 181310Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7223
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 2307

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, GY
SUBJECT: POST-REFERENDUM ACTIVITIES

BEGIN SUMMARY. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PTOLEMY REID INTRODUCED IN PARLIAMENT YESTERDAY (JULY 17) MEASURES TO PROLONG THE LIFE OF THE LEGISLATURE, AND TO CONVERT THE LEGISLATURE INTO A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSIDERING PROPOSALS FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION. DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE PAST WEEK INDICATE THAT IN THE POST-REFERENDUM PERIOD, THE GOG WILL CONTINUE TO LIMIT THE SCOPE OF ACTION PERMITTED ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS OPPOSING THE PRIMIN AND THE RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC). END SUMMARY.

1. THE DEPUTY PRIMIN INTRODUCED CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT) BILL NUMBER 2 OF 1978 TO EXTEND THE TERM OF PARLIAMENT BY FIFTEEN MONTHS. (WITHOUT THE AMENDMENT, UNDER THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION, PARLIAMENT'S TERM WOULD EXPIRE ON JULY 25, AND GENERAL ELECTIONS WOULD BE REQUIRED BY OCTOBER 25.) DEBATE ON THE BILL IS SCHEDULED FOR JULY 21, ALTHOUGH PASSAGE IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ASSURED AS PNC MEMBERS CONTROL TWO-THIRDS OF THE VOTES NEEDED FOR ADOPTION.

2. THE DEPUTY PRIMIN ALSO INTRODUCED A RESOLUTION TO ENABLE PARLIAMENT TO RESOLVE ITSELF INTO A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. THE GOG HAS STATED THAT PARLIAMENT WILL CONTINUE ITS NORMAL LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS WHILE IT IS ALSO ACTING AS

THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. IN A SPEECH ON RADIO TO THE NATION ON JULY 15, PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM REITERATED HIS PLEDGE THAT AGENERAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD WITHIN FIFTEEN MONTHS, AFTER PARLIAMENT HAS ADOPTED THE NEW CONSTITUTION DRAFTED BY THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. BURNHAM ALSO REPEATED THAT THE ASSEMBLY WILL CO-OPT MEMBERS FROM MASS ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS, THE GUYANA ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES, AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS.

2. ALTHOUGH THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION IS BEING DESCRIBED BY THE GOG AS THE NEXT LEG OF GUYANA'S "JOURNEY TOWARDS CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM," THE GOG HAS SERVED NOTICE THAT DURING THE JOURNEY THE OPPOSITION WILL BE CLOSELY WATCHED. THE WEEKLY "CATHOLIC STANDARD" ANNOUNCED IN A MIMEOGRAPHED JULY 16TH ISSUE THAT THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED GUYANA NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS HAD REFUSED TO CONTINUE PRINTING THE "STANDARD". AS A RESULT, THE "STANDARD" WILL NO LONGER CONTINUE ITS EIGHT-PAGE FORMAT, BUT WILL HAVE TO USE ITS OWN MIMEOGRAPH FACILITIES TO BRING OUT A ONE OR TWO-SHEET AFFAIR. (COMMENT: AS REPORTED EARLIER, THE "STANDARD", NEWSPAPER OF THE GUYANA CATHOLIC CHURCH, HAS RECENTLY BECOME SHARPLY CRITICAL OF THE BURNHAM GOVERNMENT, AND HAD OPPOSED THE REFERENDUM. THE "MIRROR", NEWSPAPER OF THE OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP), HAS ITS OWN PUBLISHING FACILITIES, BUT IS DEPENDENT ON THE GOVERNMENT FOR SUPPLIES OF NEWSPRINT AND TYPE. END COMMENT)

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3. THE GOG IS CONTINUING TO EXPRESS ITS DISPLEASURE WITH OPPOSITION LABOR MOVEMENTS. FIVE WORKERS WERE FIRED BY GUYMINE IN LINDEN FOR INCITING A WILDCAT STRIKE ON JULY 7 AND INTIMIDATING WORKERS. THREE OF THE WORKERS WERE CHARGED BY THE POLICE WITH DISORDERLY BEHAVIOR IN CONNECTION WITH THE STRIKE. THE DISCIPLINED WORKERS APPEAR TO BE MEMBERS OF THE MILITANT ORGANIZATION OF WORKING PEOPLE (OWP), AN ORGANIZATION AFFILIATED WITH EUSI KWAYANA'S WORKING PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE (WPA). NINE WORKERS OF THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED GUYANESE TRANSPORT SERVICE (GTS) WHO WALKED OFF THEIR JOBS FOR FOUR DAYS TO PROTEST THE FINING OF ANOTHER EMPLOYEE BY THE GTS WERE FIRED WHEN THEY RETURNED TO WORK THE DAY AFTER THE REFERENDUM. THE WORKERS ARE DEMANDING THAT THEY BE REINSTATED AND THAT THEIR UNION, THE CLERICAL AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS UNION (CCWU), BE RECOGNIZED AS THEIR BARGAINING AGENTS. THE JULY 16 EDITION OF THE "NEW NATION", WEEKLY ORGAN OF THE PNC, PUBLISHED A LETTER TO THE EDITOR HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE CCWU'S OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES. THE WRITER OPINED THAT THE CCWU IS NOW ANTI-WORKING CLASS AND HAS DESCENDED "INTO THE DEPTHS OF REACTIONARY OPPORTUNISM". THE WRITER URGED

THAT THE RANK AND FILE JOIN WITH THE GUYANESE MASSES TO
STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CCWU LEADERSHIP.

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4. MEANWHILE DEBATE OVER THE VOTING ON REFERENDUM DAY
CONTINUES. THE GOG CLAIMS THAT THE REPUTED HIGH VOTER
TURNOUT WAS DUE TO EFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION OF THE VOTERS BY
THE PNC. THE "NEW NATION" OF JULY 16 CARRIED AN ANONYMOUS
ARTICLE REITERATING THE CHARGE THAT THE "CARIBBEAN CONTACT",
WHICH HAS PUBLISHED ARTICLES CRITICAL OF THE REFERENDUM
PROCEDURE, IS FINANCED BY THE CIA AND USED BY "ALIEN
AND LOCAL DESTABILISERS". ON THE OTHER HAND, THE "MIRROR"
ALLEGES THAT SINCE THE REFERENDUM THE POLICE ARRESTED FOR
BRIEF PERIODS PPP POLLING AGENTS AND SEARCHED THEIR HOMES
FOR NOTES ON VOTE FRAUD. ON JULY 13 THE "MIRROR" CLAIMED
THAT THE ONLY LINE VISIBLE ON REFERENDUM DAY WAS THE ONE
IN FRONT OF THE AMERICAN CONSULTE, AND PUBLISHED A PICTURE
OF GUYANESE WAITING IN LINE TO BE INTERVIEWED FOR VISAS.
(THE JOKE MAKING THE ROUNDS IN GEORGETOWN IS THAT THERE
WERE ACTUALLY ONLY TWO LINES ON REFERENDUM DAY, ONE IN
FRONT OF THE AMERICAN CONSULATE, AND THE OTHER IN FRONT
OF THE GOG PASSPORT OFFICE.)

5. THE GOVERNMENT HAS DEALT FIRMLY WITH AN ESTIMATED
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150 FAMILIES WHO APPARENTLY ACTED ON THE GOG'S CAMPAIGN
PLEDGE OF LAND TO THE TILLER AND HOUSING FOR ALL BY
SQUATTING ON UNOCCUPIED LAND IN THE BERBICE AREA. ON
JULY 13 THE GOG ORDERED THE SQUATTERS TO VACATE THEIR
BUILDINGS AND REMOVE THEM WITHIN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS, AFTER
GIVING ASSURANCES THAT LAND WILL BE ALLOCATED ON THE BASIS
OF NEED.

6. COMMENT: THERE HAS YET BEEN NO INDICATION THAT THE
GOG WILL CLOSE DOWN THE "MIRROR" OR DECLARE ILLEGAL ANY
OPPOSITION GROUPS. HOWEVER, EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK IN-
DICATE THAT PRIMIN BURNHAM'S GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE
TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE OPPOSITION, AND ATTEMPT TO LINK
THEIR ACTIVITIES WITH "DESTABILIZERS".
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